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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

A LECTURE

ON THE

UNCERTAINTIES OF HISTORY,

DELIVERED IN THE

HALL OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNITED STATES,

BEFORE

THE CAPITOL HILL INSTITUTE,

DECEMBER 17, 1842.

BY LEVI WOODBURY.

WASHINGTON:
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1843.

CORRESPONDENCE.

WASHINGTON, December 21, 1842.

DEAR SIR: At a meeting of the Capitol Hill Institute, last evening, it was unanimously "Resolved, That the thanks of the Institute be given to the Honorable LEVI WOODBURY, for his able, eloquent, and interesting lecture delivered before this Association on Saturday evening last, and that he be respectfully requested to furnish a copy for the press."

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

SIMON BROWN, *Secretary.*

WASHINGTON, December 24, 1842.

DEAR SIR: Allow me to express my best acknowledgments to the Capitol Hill Institute, for the very favorable manner in which its members speak of my address.

Though it requires revision before publication, I have not leisure for that purpose at present; and herewith comply with the request of the Institute, by placing a copy of it at their disposal.

Respectfully,

LEVI WOODBURY.

SIMON BROWN, ESQ., *Secretary of the Institute.*

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LECTURE.

It has been an interesting enquiry in all ages—What is the Truth?

At the foundation of this enquiry, whether relating to science, the arts, politics, or religion, has been an early, if not the greatest question—What is the truth in History?

What does it show, on the momentous topics—Whence came we? When? Where? Why? Whither do we tend? What have been the chief instruments to advance, or retard, the human race? How long is its progress to last? And what, for greater weal or woe, is to be the consummation of its destiny? Considerations like these are vital to all. But, on this occasion, I do not propose to glance at any of them, except the uncertainties which exist in much of history. These, with their evils and their cure, deserve the careful attention of all who would improve the condition of the world. It will be perceived, by allusions already made, that it is not uncertainties in the history of monarchs and battles merely, to which I refer, or in humble pedigrees confined to books of heraldry and family coats-of-arms, but it is those in history in its broadest sense, including what relates to the literature, and the general progress and great moral movements of society, as well as remarkable changes in rulers and forms of government. So, the uncertainties themselves, to which your attention is invited, are not merely the outright falsehoods and blunders, in which some annals abound, nor those imperfections in human affairs, which are inseparable from the finite faculties of man, as an individual, subject to a brief span of life, and those numerous interruptions by which the labors of many are so often baffled. They are not so much matters like these, as the doubts and obscurities in history, which arise from any cause whatever, and which affect not only individuals, but the longer life and continued labors of the human race as a race; such, too, as affect them by not preserving with accuracy the principles, powers, deeds, and condition of man, through centuries and the duration of empires, and even through a series of the rise and fall of many empires, and in a manner most conducive to the instruction, security, and progress of the world at large.

These uncertainties are the most striking when connected with accounts of the earliest ages. Then all, in profane history, is either a blank, or obscured in the mist of fable and the imagery of epic, or the mythology of legendary lore. For who, let me ask, can attempt, without the aid of inspiration, to penetrate the abyss of time, and trace out, with anything like satisfaction, either the birth of man—the growth of arts before the deluge—the appal-

ling circumstances attendant on the submersion of a world—the renovation and second dispersion of the human family—or much of the ravages of conquest, which have since so often forced forward a worse moral flood to overwhelm civilization, than any physical one which ever wore down mountains, or pushed oceans over their wonted barriers?

Equally vague would it be to track, with accuracy, the migrations since of millions of Hebrew exiles, or the wanderings of those swarms from the northern hive which, for so many ages, devastated Asia and Southern Europe; or the sea-rovings—so far, wide, and civilizing—of Phœnician commerce; or the daring adventures or hopeless shipwrecks that imprinted the first human footstep on the shores of this western continent, and in the tides of ages peopled it from the poles to the equator. The accounts of many of these matters have entirely vanished in the night of time, and of others have survived only in fragments and wrecks. These last, too, are aided more in certainty by the monuments of nature than of man; for a gushing spring like Helicon, or a brook like Scamander and Kedron, or a mountain like Ida, go further to identify the site of ancient cities and battles, than the best descriptions without them, or the earliest works of art which have ever been attempted.

But, in the very first ages, where are the monuments of any kind, of the public mind? Of its social relations—its progress in arts—and all its brilliant triumphs of genius? Uncertainties cloud the whole; and we are forced to leave most of these things, when unenlightened by sacred annals, not only as obscure, but as a mighty maze, and the oracles they utter almost as dark and scattered as the Sibylline leaves.

Events more modern come nearer to our bosoms and business. But when we scrutinize particular incidents in them, it is to be lamented that often, even there, our ears sometimes listen to uncertain sounds, and our paths become almost as devious as among the mists of remote antiquity. The questions, then, are not such as—who erected the pyramids? the puzzle and wonder of many ages, and the truth to be released from its imprisonment of three thousand years, only through the superior acuteness of such enquirers as Champillon. Not whether civilization, or even language, was in early time matured by human exertion, or bestowed, full grown, Minerva-like, by divine inspiration; nor whether the ameliorating laws of both were then wafted to Ethiopia first, or to India, or to Egypt; and hundreds of similar doubts as to events in the infancy of the human race.

But it is rather, as Sir Walter Raleigh once experienced, the uncertainties about many things that happened, almost within our own neighborhoods, and have a more immediate interest with the practical affairs of life in the present age. That daring adventurer and early explorer of Virginia and Carolina, besides being a graceful

courtier in the palaces of Elizabeth, was a learned historian, and is reputed, in despair of the truth as to an event happening under his own window, to have consigned to the flames some of his most valuable manuscripts.

Under such discouragements, by means of the contradictory and obscure, as to what transpires in our own time, well may we feel despondency at procuring the exact truth respecting what happened in no very distant epoch, to say nothing of such remoter periods as those characterized by pastoral simplicity, golden ages, and heroic grandeur. With a wish to illustrate these views by a few instances, not very ancient, and yet so far off as to assume no invidious or party aspect, let me ask what person can readily decide on the guilt of the beautiful Mary, perishing on the scaffold under the insatiate envy of her great virgin rival? Or who had most agency in bringing Charles the First to the block? or in planting freedom of conscience, as well as liberty in government, on the tolerating borders of the wilderness of this new hemisphere? And who, or what, put the first ball in motion of the great reformation which has immortalized Luther, but left comparatively in the shade Wickliffe, Huss, and many others perhaps no less daring, devoted, and deserving.

Again. What is the Truth in respect to a thousand dark conspiracies in Venetian and other annals, over which doubts yet linger? Or what is hereafter to be divulged by the further researches of our Prescotts and Irvings, as to numerous questions in the almost sealed book of Spanish discovery and supremacy in both Americas; and among these, not least, the influence, political and social, as well as religious, of the vast labours and enterprises of the missionary Jesuits in either hemisphere? Tell me, also, those that can, who exerted the most substantial influence in effecting that noblest revolution in England, when a bigoted James was dethroned? Who in our own, foremost among the greatest? Who in that of France?

Not who then conducted conquering armies, but who vindicated most ably the rights of man, and who risked most for the popular cause, and roused highest the public pulse in zeal for liberty and courage in council?

Much uncertainty rests, also, over many minor questions in modern annals, that still possessed interest enough in their day and generation to agitate whole communities. Such, for instance, as whether Mirabeau played most the part of a demagogue or patriot? Or Bonaparte poisoned his sick soldiers at Jaffa? Or Burke, or Boyd, or some other politician, in an iron mask, wrote Junius? Or who invented the quadrant, Godfrey or Hadley?

And, to come nearer home, whether Benedict Arnold, though in the end confessedly a traitor, ever deserved credit for anything beyond rash impulses? Or, even, who commanded at Bunker Hill—that memorable, and, at last, monumental, arena of militia glory?

Passing by a multitude of inquiries like these, I could, were it

proper to approach nearer the holy ground of cotemporaneous history, which few can tread with safety before a mixed audience, array a long catalogue of questions still more recent, and equally as much mystified by doubts. They would include the character even of some divines, no less than authors, politicians, and lawgivers, and the conflicting claims of genius to many of the greatest improvements in modern times. It is not merely, as Sir Roger de Coverly is made to observe, that on most questions much can be said on both sides, but that the real obscurities, on many of an historical character, are such as to pain and perplex every honest enquirer; for the chameleon colors, given by haste, or prejudice, passion, ignorance, or party, to most events and characters, as well as systems of any importance, tend to make partizans on every thing, and champions on every side. Thus, as an instance, touch but the conflicting merits of some engaged in the battle of Lake Erie, or the Thames, and how quickly would the blood of most of us be made to boil?

So, with what speed would many display the red or white rose, in hostile array, if discussing the doubtful preference due to some rival sects in religion, so near that their Sabbath bells ring weekly in our ears; or to some rival systems in medicine, practised on the maladies even of our own bodies; or some rival theories of political economy, or rival parties in politics, in whose conflicts we ourselves are combatants?

As a fresh illustration of the different hues put on many matters by different historians, is a national event which has just agitated the community under our own eyes, and which it may not be invidious to mention. It was considered so doubtful as to require grave official enquiry, and no less affected our pride and reputation, than whether the persevering Wilkes, whose recent explorations have done so much for the cause of science and commerce, did in fact discover land—a southern continent near the Antarctic—before, or after the French navigators.

But enough has been suggested to indicate some of the numerous uncertainties which envelope us at every step, in the search after historical truth; and hence, I proceed to the next material enquiry: What have been the consequences usually flowing from such uncertainties?

In my view, they have been fruitful in evils. The character and progress of the human race have thus, in many instances, been misunderstood, and their improvement much retarded. The truth has, in this way, been frequently discolored, when not suppressed; and, instead of it, exaggerations being emblazoned, and additions and inventions heaped up without end, man has been constantly misled as to the past, and has thus often stumbled into fatal errors, both in conducting the affairs of the present, and planning for the future. Vast chasms, too, are at times found, increasing these uncertainties, where even ages and centuries have disappeared, and, with them, most of

what they achieved, either in usefulness or glory. Where some mutilated records survive, it frequently happens that they are so incredible as to contribute, with other circumstances, to veil the truth, concerning the whole, in mystery. Again: in a myriad of instances, deliberate perversions and distortions stare us in the face. Whether prompted by sycophancy to the vain, or pride, passion, or sordid ambition, they fully justify the complaining exclamation of the lion in the fable, as to the different aspect which would have been put on his contests with man, had the figures in the sketch been drawn by a different painter, or the controversy described by an impartial historian. And who does not know the contradictory features which, from like causes, are given to many of the great battles—modern, no less than ancient—on land or ocean, and even to those miniature ones in politics, at the ballot-boxes, as the accounts come from the victors or the vanquished?

Considerations like these will likewise much lessen our surprise at the very opposite glosses appearing on the pages of much of history since the Reformation, as compiled by Catholics on the one hand, or Protestants on the other, and, since the Protectorate in England, as drawn up by republicans of the Cromwell school, or such as he was wont to style malignant monarchists. What we are to believe, amidst such conflicting representations, is manifestly not only perplexing, but, at times, ruinous to a healthy faith, and the cause of honest principles and sound progress.

We are compelled, also, to lament the wrongs done by uncertain annals to the good name and deeds of several of the noblest benefactors of their race. Some of them lived long in advance of their age, and thus becoming its scoff or its victims, their views were distorted, and their memories blackened, no less than their days shortened, by bitter intolerance. Under the discordant accounts given of their characters, the virtues of many of them have long remained under a cloud, or suffered total eclipse, till an age more liberal, inquisitive, and just, came for their vindication. On the other hand, such annals have done much to convert many into fierce persecutors. Some of those who occupy a large portion of the pages of history, and give tone to society—making its character for ages but a lengthened shadow of their own—have evidently been bigots or tyrants, from a mere want of more certain facts and truths to enlighten and guide them. The mischief has been effected by means of fallacious historical examples, and through heresies in public opinion, debased by loose histories, and false systems founded on loose histories. We are likewise forced to sigh over evils, from this source, to nations and ages, as well as individuals. The progress which has at times been made in diffusing great truths of all kinds, over whole kingdoms as well as eras, has been much delayed in consequence of uncertainties and doubts, caused by omissions, in some cases, in the annals of the past, and in others by treacherous discolorings. Some large communities have also been so isolated,

and their career so uncertain, that scarce a plank has floated from them on the stream of time. And, to the rest of the world, they lived and died nearly in vain, furnishing scarce enough to other nations "to point a moral or adorn a tale." Some governments, different still, have existed as monstrous impostures, and, like the veiled prophet, or Mahomet, have subdued to their rule, by ignorance and fanaticism, many successive generations, who with more certain knowledge of the delusions which oppressed them, would have escaped from servitude so humiliating, and avenged their wrongs. In short, wherever any nations have introduced vagueness into their systems of public faith, morals, or policy, originating either in ignorance, or king-craft, or priest-craft, or demagogue-craft, they have tempted the public mind astray, and lived worse than in vain, because they have helped to widen the reign of error in almost every thing, not only false gods in religion—Molochs and Juggernauts—but false gods in government, manners, legislation, taste. And it is examples like these, that for ages, in some of the most beautiful regions of the globe, have created uncertainty as to the right and the true, in almost every essential of life, and extended it wider and deeper, till all has withered within reach of its sirocco influence. If the evil spirit of darkness, which in some systems of philosophy is supposed to have once struggled with that of light for dominion over the world, is, without much stretch of imagination, considered in such cases as still contending for the mastery, it must be obvious that, unless effectually rebuked, such a malign power will spread its leprosy, till the mind, heart, and soul of society are all poisoned, and some of the fearful imaginings of Byron or Coleridge may be morally realized—where gangrene and death creep over all the living, till "darkness becomes the universe."

If we enter more into particular consequences, the evils are no less appalling. Thus, as to religion, none can hesitate to admit—no skeptic, even, will gainsay—that if all the annals of the world had been as free from omissions and mistakes as those (however defective) during one's own existence, he would not feel compelled to believe both the Mosaic outline of creation and the Christian scheme of redemption. I speak not now of any supernatural influence, but of man merely as a moral and intellectual being, and the principles of his nature brought to bear on facts and reasoning, so as to produce conviction or disbelief. Let me ask, then, what greater curse could be inflicted on the world, than such a state of uncertainty in the annals of the past, as to produce doubts in thousands, not to say scoffs, on topics connected with their eternal as well as temporal interests? So in morals. Except as elevated by the spirit of Christianity, they stand much as in the days of Cicero and Plutarch, and have for ages been much neglected as a separate study, founded on examples and axioms of conduct carefully preserved in history, and arranged with a view to this ennobling end. Except that, amidst the severe ills of life, it is still Epicureanism,

which is to divest or drown them in pleasure, and seize the day, as it flies, for sensual enjoyment; or it is the indifference of Fatalism; or it is Stoicism, stern, either to endure with iron will, or die.

It is true that changes innumerable have since occurred, full of warning if duly weighed; and principles the most visionary been tested—glaring examples of both good and evil exhibited. But, unfortunately, after all this, the moral movements of the world seem chiefly to have been in a circle, rather than forward, or upward, in some direct line, nearer and nearer to the magnificent perfection which formed and controls the universe.

So in government. Had the true sources of national prosperity been always correctly recorded, all doubts as to certain events, and their influence on public power and public happiness, would long ere this have been removed. It would have been settled far beyond our present bitter controversies, as well as ruinous vascillations, what system of laws was most useful?—what form of public institutions wisest?—what kind of taxation most equal and just?—what theories of political economy soundest?—what species of currency safest? what banking best?—what credit paper, superior among all those which now prevail, or which once run so disastrous a career in some of the Mogul empires of the East, as well as in the revolutionary exigencies of both France and America?

Long ere this, likewise, it would have been much nearer agreed what are the true relations between capital and labour? and what kind of exertions, though they should be strenuous in all forms, could be made with most chance of success by the masses in every country to attain that degree of intelligence which is so indispensable to self-government; and what treasonable injustice it must always be in the few towards the many to thwart them in such exertions?

But, heretofore, instead of this, either a pall of doubt, to most eyes, enshrouds the whole of these points—or differences in the accounts of both causes and consequences lead to controversies without end, and create distrust in the conclusions of much of political science, as well as impair confidence in many of the lessons and examples of the past on everything.

It cannot, therefore, be seriously questioned, that much of bad opinions, bad theories, and bad systems, has been the result of this uncertainty in facts.

It is imperfect facts which have made imperfect systems; false facts often, (if I may be allowed the expression,) which have caused false systems; and the broad path, thus opened to error, hardly needs illustration.

All can see, that what begins in doubt as to one event, is apt to extend to another, and another; and from doubt to grow into condemnation, and from condemnation to collision, and thence at times to vices or crimes, no less than fatal delusions.

By adverting to some of the evils from uncertainties in the exact sciences, we shall find evidences of what is equally dangerous from them in accounts connected with other matters; but they are stronger and more striking in the sciences, because there they can be measured with more accuracy and distinctness. You will, therefore, excuse me for particularizing one or two of them.

An uncertainty of a single minute, in the latitude and longitude of a seaport, or dangerous reef, as given on nautical charts, have often caused numerous shipwrecks; because a minute's difference, sometimes equaling a mile in distance, must, at times, during fogs or darkness, mislead the most skilful pilot, and strand the strongest vessel. From a like source has arisen half of the litigation and expenses concerning the boundaries of land. So the evils from the want of a certain standard in use in weights and measures in the United States, may be readily conjectured, when it is known, that, before their late revision by Mr. Hassler, some of them differed quite one-eighth of the whole. The injurious consequences of uncertainties have also been recently evinced on a national scale in our disputes with England. A doubtful description of a boundary has helped to lose for us a tract of country, larger in size than some States in the Union. And a mistake many years since, in running and describing the 45th degree of latitude, placed in jeopardy an expensive fort, as well as a whole tier of towns on the northern side of Vermont.

Again: it is undeniable that there have sprung up, from uncertainties as to the past, many losses of intellectual enjoyment, independent of other and greater evils.

For what high satisfaction could be derived from records more accurate of only ordinary occurrences in most of the ages gone by? As, for instance, who would not rejoice, if a newspaper had been published in Jerusalem, during the life of Christ—or in the early days of Noah—and had been transmitted to us unmutated?

Or if we could now obtain more every day facts of all kinds as to different ancient nations, such as a suit of common clothing, even to the garment Archdeacon Paley was anxious to procure from Turkey? Or a collection of household furniture and agricultural and mechanical implements, such as has recently from China deluged the American public? Or, when deprived of these or the treasures of a Pompeii—extended to all ages, and countries—to have transmitted, instead of them, such certain descriptions and drawings as to leave no doubt concerning the progress in comfort and civilization, which these particulars, though so humble, might with great interest unfold, as well as contribute even now to many valuable improvements. And who would not be instructed, no less than grateful, if some certain annals existed to solve all doubts, whether many of the supposed inventions of such immense value, made in modern times, were not known in some former epoch, and have been lost since by emigration, or conquest, or the want of the embalming power of the Press.

Who can measure, also, our privations from not having traced, with truthful light and certainty, the numerous revolutions that have taken place on the surface of the globe, and all the greater geological mysteries which six thousand years of scrutiny and careful observation, if preserved with certainty, would have developed, as to the structure of the earth, its mines, its bursting fountains, its fathomless oceans—its dews, clouds, and tempests—its millions of plants and animals, and all its relations to the other planets which fill the heavens and furnish such constant evidences of a Power above and around us so wonderful?

But, through many ages, the curiosity of man has, on some of these topics, been baffled by anarchy—on others, plunged into mystic fables—and on others, groping in darkness palpable, and his intellect and energies wasted in some respects on conjectures the most chimerical. There has been, to be sure, a rushlight of history on some matters, but even that, so feeble as often to make the general gloom more visible. If a skeleton has, here and there, been found in partial preservation among the historical ashes of ages gone by, where are the muscles and sinews, the nerves, the life-blood?

Where is much of the mind—the divinity within? where the records of many of its glories and proudest trophies? Unfortunately, attention has been bestowed too often on what is least valuable to society; and thus the useful principles, inventions, arts, and even the literature and sciences, which embellished what the others advanced, have not only been more neglected, but in some cases, where cultivated, have perished irrecoverably. The extent of such losses it is of course difficult to ascertain. But, though the rays of intellect may never have shed much light on the sands of the interior of Africa, nor on the mysteries that darken the pagodas of the East, we know that in many former eras they illuminated brightly all the shores of the Mediterranean, and that some of their productions have since vanished, it is feared, forever. And we weep, and rationally so, much more over a lost book of Livy and a treatise of Cicero, or a work on science, which has disappeared, than over a lost Pleiad, or an island that has sunk, or the ruins of some nameless city. The former, if preserved, might have edified and advanced all after ages; but the latter may have interested only a few, and benefitted none. So, had half the attention been bestowed, only in Egypt, for instance, on the faithful preservation of experiments and principles, in books—those mummies of the mind—which have been lavished in preserving the mere dross of departed spirits, how much more steadfast would now be the public faith? how much more elevated, in most things, the public taste—more enlightened public opinion, and larger all public acquirements?

For what, let me ask, are the dry and stiffened corpses of the catacombs? what is monumental marble or granite? or what, in usefulness, even the cold canvas of painting, or the colder stone

of sculpture, compared with the warmth of poetry and the ever-teaching, ever-inspiring records of devotion and philosophy?

Again, history, when we have it, is usually much fuller of the cruelties of tyranny, the persecutions of intolerance, fanatical crusades, impostures, debased superstitions, victims and martyrs of all kinds—with the orgies of passion, the plots and counter-plots of ambition, the horrors of revenge, the blasphemies of crime, and all the carnage and devastation of war—than with means to add to the comforts, or the powers and usefulness of other generations. Nor does this happen entirely from there having been little which is milder, more peaceful, and better, in the actual doings of the human race through its long career, but that crime, pride, and ambition have often perverted history to their own glorification; and again, that at times a vitiated taste has rather preserved what is most startling, though worthless, and thus encouraged it, without discriminating between the glory of such courage and devotion to country as actuated Leonidas, Hampden, Tell, or Warren, from that which madly drove an Alexander to universal empire, or a Zenghis Khan to ravage half the world for rapine or revenge; and giving far more space and research to the deeds of the latter, than to those of the Fausts, the Arkwrights, Whitneys, Watts, Franklins, and Fultons, who impart such new powers to man, and do so much to elevate the masses and civilize the rude, as well as improve all, in coming time.

Well might we consent to blot from the records of our race half its heroes, could we obtain, in return, certain accounts of a single new and useful implement of husbandry, or one valuable tool more for the mechanic, or any new method to promote humble industry or strengthen virtue even in the lowliest.

Indeed, now, much as we seem to know of the surface of society, and especially of civil transactions, how little do we learn, clearly, from most history, of all the currents and under-currents of human affairs, including the true mechanism of the best solaces of private life, as well as the mainsprings of public action, and the progress of the faith and opinions of mankind, no less than of their great pursuits and instruments of living. No one can readily compute the obstacles which, by such omissions and their consequent uncertainties, have been cast in the path of all kinds of improvement, not merely in one age or nation, but in the long career of humanity. As an illustration of this, let me ask, if all do not see, at once, that we should at this moment be far more, inconceivably more, advanced in all knowledge connected with our vital interests, had the world, by more careful preservation of useful facts, known but a century, earlier all we now know, of the structure, functions, and wonders of our own frames, our own minds—the properties and changes of the earth on which we tread—the food we consume, the air we breathe, and the skies we gaze on—if not the Heavens we hope for?

The omissions to record at all, or record aright, the various operations of mind and matter, with the experiments in both, have also contributed to retard so late, and with injury incalculable to many generations, most of what has been discovered of magnitude in the few last centuries, not merely of printing, gunpowder, the compass, the kine-pox, steam, chemistry, and all their advancing glories; but on many things before alluded to—such as the principles and seat of animal life, the circulation of the blood, the knowledge of metaphysics, and many of the mysterious sources of motion, instinct, passion, and opinion.

And after all these, there is still an evil-working obscurity in much of modern history, on some topics essential to aid the great future on earth, as well as reconcile man more fully to the ways of Providence in the tardy justice which sometimes appears to be awarded to nations, no less than individuals.

We want to be more often admitted behind the curtain of both public and domestic life. Let us have the pangs of each, as well as their pomp; and the hidden shoals to be shunned, no less than the public virtues to be imitated. Let us have more of the inside of the whole social and political fabric. When historians give us any thing certain now, (and we have words enough on some matters—pretensions and prating enough,) it is usually in respect to the exterior alone—the mere walls and painting; on all the rest we suffer greatly from not having more unquestionable facts, more useful truths, more foundations for sound theory and intelligent faith—more causes of facts and events—more principles, that controlled empires and ages—in short, more fruits instead of shrivelled leaves—real, full light on the past, rather than a glimmer, sometimes more faithless than the tradiuon of the Indian wigwam.

The only other evil, from historical uncertainties, which I shall now notice, is that arising from the entire loss of the annals of some whole eras and centuries. This catastrophe has been one of the most formidable obstacles, both to constancy and rapidity in improvement. For where, by the art of writing, or any other device, mankind have for a time had facts perpetuated in a form more reliable than tradition, the tides of conquest have occasionally burst in and so desolated the records, as well as cities, of subjugated nations, that sometimes not even the names and dates have escaped, of those who intrigued or fought for empires; nor much of the real character of many of the happy accidents that improved, or the avenging scourges that oppressed, the millions they ruled; and less still has there in such cases come down to us, with certainty, much of the true origin and progress of all that then contributed to advance either national wealth, happiness, or power. Hence, amidst doubtful researches among such fragments of annals, what one seeker for truth now attributes to the forms of government, another traces to different systems of political economy, or peculiarities in public morals. And where one enquirer now thinks he can discover almost an elixir for greatness, and another detect the very

canker which preys unseen on the damask of power, still another can only discover a dash of kingdoms after kingdoms on the shore of time, with almost as little apparent benefit as the break of the ocean for ages on our own iron-bound coast. Indeed, every few centuries, it would seem that, in some portions of the globe, neither books nor manuscripts have ever talked to the eye; or both, from some untold disaster, have vanished. Thus the intellectual memorials of those who reared Palmyra, except her ruins—and the American systems of theology, and the arts and sciences which built and ornamented the cities of Central America, except their unknown idols and broken pillars, or crumbled temples and forest-covered mounds; and thus, most of the genius and acquirements which overawed northern Europe, from the Druidical groves of Germany and England, in ages as rude, if not earlier and cloudier—all have perished!

But more marked still is the darkness that covers the antediluvian history of the earth. There has been almost a total loss of more than two thousand years of human efforts—a destruction of the benefits of near one-third of the life of the human race, human experience, human examples and acquirements; and, except the fragments preserved in sacred writ, scarce an echo reaches us from all beyond the dread bourne of the deluge!

In the absence of printing, and the loss of written records, even painting and hieroglyphics—where, in some countries, cultivated for historical purposes and spared from devastation by their Vandal invaders—even they, where not since entirely corroded, have slept for ages undeciphered, and their meaning remained as dumb as the wood or stone on which it reposes, and their object so uncertain as seldom to have wakened devotion, ensured reverence, or warmed patriotism; however they may, at times, have attracted admiration from some Marius seated in exile on the ruins around them, or some wandering Arab encamped under their shade. Indeed, the whole earth has been called a graveyard. In this way, however, it is so; not only as to human bodies, but their minds, their deeds, the intellectual graces and moral glories of our race. These seem, from age to age, not unfrequently to have crumbled into dust as undistinguished as that of the millions of tongues which once sung heroic exploits, and of hearts that beat high for fame—and of sinewy arms that helped to protect the hearth and altar, and “cultivate, in peace, the fields they defended in war.”

If, as Shakspeare moralized, the ashes of Alexander and Cæsar may, in time, have become applied to the vilest uses, or, as Shelly reasons—

“There’s not one atom of this earth
But once was living man;
Nor the minutest drop of rain,
That hangeth in its thinnest cloud,
But flowed in human veins”—

may not the histories of many Alexanders—the moralizings of wisdom, no less than the fierce struggles of ambition—the brilliant pro-

ductions of many Shakspeares—the discoveries in the heavens by Newtons and Herschels unnumbered—have contributed to form the very soil now tilled near the sites of Babylon, or the ancient palaces of the Incas and Montezumas ?

How often catastrophes so disheartening have crushed the most glorious labors of the mind, in both continents, doubtless sweeping off some drops and rubbish at the same time, is as unknown to us, under the uncertainty of history, as are the like revulsions which may have been going on since creation, in the myriad of worlds which blaze above us. Perhaps we shall no sooner penetrate all the mysteries of one than the other. But sleep on, great and good spirits of all ages ! known or unknown—discoverers, lawgivers, sages, or statesmen ; sleep on, many of your mighty deeds and beneficent principles, doubtless well suited to improve a long posterity, but more the fault of others than you, and more our misfortune than yours, that so little of them has descended to us. Enough, however, has been saved from the storms of time, to occasion the deepest regrets for the losses and doubts caused by such historical wrecks, and to awaken much anxiety to prevent their recurrence hereafter.

Let us search then closely, to ascertain whether any of these uncertainties, and their evils, can hereafter be averted ? and how ?

If, as some fear, all of them are beyond remedy, nothing remains except to shudder over our palsied condition. But, though unable to accomplish everything desirable, it should not, in my view, deter us from doing something, if practicable ; and it seems to me, under the influence even of temperate hopes, to be rational to expect much from efforts more systematic, discriminating, and earnest.

Thus, whenever we can trace any of these uncertainties to distinct causes, it is philosophical to remove the causes, and in this way prevent the evils ; and, when they cannot be removed entirely, to seek to counteract, or in any way mitigate, their prejudicial tendency.

In this mode, those which have arisen from imperfections of the senses have been, and can continue to be, diminished, by efforts so obvious as hardly to need enumeration. Take but one sense, for illustration—that of sight. The doubts which once existed as to the movements, qualities, and size of all distant objects, when viewed by the naked eye, and the evils resulting from uncertain accounts of them, have, in many cases, entirely vanished under the astonishing powers of the telescope. Even as to those remote bodies that float so many millions of miles above us, the uncertainties about them have, by modern improvements, been so much removed, that we now know their revolutions with almost as perfect correctness as those of the earth itself—the capacity of some to be inhabited or not, and the immense bulk of others, exceeding ten to a hundred times that of the globe itself ; while the same species of improvement, conducted with similar accuracy and patience in

making and recording observations, has pushed the powers of human vision so far, in respect to smaller objects, as to disclose numberless microscopic wonders, where all before was uncertainty or ignorance. It has thus increased the power of the eye, not only in acquiring knowledge, but in performing many of the most difficult mechanical labors; and has contributed to the enjoyments of all, by opening new worlds of being, to delight, instruct, and astonish, whether in the smallest drop of water, or on the lightest leaf. Without dwelling upon this, all must see that we are only in the infancy of such improvements, and that science, by further perseverance, may thus pour further light on what is obscure as to the history of many things—animals, vegetables, and minerals—which intimately concern man in his present state of being.

But the evils in historical uncertainties, arising from the moral obliquity of the heart, and from habit and extraneous influences, are much more difficult to trace, as well as to remedy. Whether their direct cause be, as it often is, ignorance or passion, carelessness or haste, interest, party, or vindictive prejudice, they do not seem to me to be entirely incurable, though some entertain but little confidence in any means to remedy them, short of new supernatural aid. But, on an occasion like this, avoiding the discussion of any polemical questions, I shall advert to no interposition of Providence beyond what has already occurred, or what all that live hourly experience. Keeping this consideration in view, what, then, are the great remedies?

First, we have, for principles to guide historians, as well as, in many respects, for a beautiful model, the Sacred history of mankind. Surely they can more nearly approach, if not equal, some of the excellencies which pervade that—such as its pure-mindedness, its chrysal clearness as to facts, and its striking condensation. The history of a whole people for four thousand years, and the biography of the most remarkable being known on earth since time begun, with the acts of his apostles, and the entire body of divinity he, as well as the prophets, taught—are all compressed into a single volume; and by the clearness, simplicity, and truthfulness of its narrative, and the lofty rules of action it inculcates, has helped, in all ages since, to reform an apostate world.

This at least can be imitated closer, where not equalled in form; while in its substance, abating the difference between inspiration and human skill, a spirit of caution, purity, and vigilance can shun all wilful uncertainties, and lessen much those resulting from inadvertence. But, descending to more specific rules, and drawing instruction from all sources, it must be obvious, that another of the leading means to prevent uncertainties, must always be to avoid haste, and increase research. Writers must never flag in labor, patience, and pains-taking. Most that is valuable is of slow growth. The “brave old oak” that has stood “the storms of a thousand years” is much slower in reaching maturity, as well as much more

valuable than the mushroom; and the elephant, whose gestations are "few and far between," produces only elephants—animals of size, power, and length of life, worthy of their origin—instead of ephemerals.

Another efficient mode of improvement is to cherish more singleness of purpose. Improvement should be, not only a paramount object, but the first, second, and third. It should engross all the energies of the soul; and when those energies are dedicated to historical compilations, they should be exclusively devoted to it. There should be nothing else to weaken or divert the attention—nothing lukewarm in feeling, nor amphibious in habits—but a single heart, a whole heart, and an earnest heart, intensely engaged in clearing up what is obscure; and, instead of tamperings and misgivings, or suppressions and colorings, boldly recording for the future the naked unvarnished truth in all things—yes, "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

Another remedy is to distinguish, with greater accuracy, what is really uncertain, and hence needing more illustration and research—from what is so only temporarily and in appearance. For, amidst many of the doubts in history, they are not always unmixed with a clear conviction as to some prominent and general results; and thus, amidst lights and shadows, crossing and bewildering at first the public eye, there will, when the excitements of the day subside, and the passions of the moment are hushed, be a few facts, which, by due discrimination, are fully verified, and standing forth forever incontestible. Without such a discrimination, much time will be wasted; and without exceptions like these, much more of history would seem to be an unalloyed evil. To explain this distinction, by an example or two: It is now clear that, whatever any one may think as to Carthage, or her conquering rival—which was most Punic in faith, and which was most inexorable in revenge—nobody can doubt that the former was overcome, and most of the memorials of her vast commerce and extensive influence in civilization, were relentlessly extirpated.

Few can now doubt that the masses in France possess more intelligence, security, and power, than they did before the revolution—whatever differences of opinion may still linger as to some of the supposed oppressions which preceded it, or some of the atrocities which followed. Nobody can now question the more rapid progress made in civilization, over both Europe and America, since the discovery of the latter—whatever may be the diversity of views as to who was the first fortunate finder of the new world, or as to what have since been the crimes and virtues displayed towards its aboriginal inhabitants.

Can any, also, disbelieve the existence once of such a being as Christ, and the ameliorating influence of his doctrines—whatever conflicting opinions may be still entertained concerning his divinity?

Or can any now question the benefits of steam in the arts and in commerce, fatal as have been its explosions, or doubtful as its first discoverer—or who dares compete with Fulton for the new application of it successfully to motion on the water?

Nor can any now, after careful reflection, deny the utility of machinery, by which the labor of millions is yearly saved or added, however many individuals may at first have been thrown out of employment by its introduction, and however deep the doubts and darkness may yet rest over the inventors of the plough, the loom, the axe, or the graceful ship—inventors as distinguished in their day, and of machinery as important to the welfare of mankind, as Whitney and the cotton-gin, or Arkwright and the spinning-jenny.

It is thus that, among our painful regrets at many uncertainties in the past, there may be constantly mixed the satisfactory acquisition of a few great results, if we only analyze and discriminate, rather than hastily condemn the whole in a mass; denouncing it all, as some have, to be no better than an old almanac—or, as others do, unauthentic as the Arabian Nights' tales.

In this way, too, as all is not shrouded in doubt, a gloomy skepticism can be avoided; and our energies, instead of being wasted on what is either impracticable or indisputable, can be concentrated on the illustration of something feasible, useful, and, at the same time, really doubtful. Beside some such great results, we can also gather up, by patient research through the long vista of time, a few scattered gems of various value, and, as in modern travel, find, half hidden in the dust of ages, some rusty coins, broken statues, and fragments of altars and temples. Though acquisitions such as these might not alone edify so much as amuse, yet, in the whole concerns of the race, they often illustrate what was doubtful, and to many persons always possess an innocent as well as gratifying interest.

Another mode of throwing stronger, if not new, light on what is uncertain and obscure, is by more attention to those very matters in connexion with others, and thus to widen the range of enquiry, and draw historical aid from collateral illustrations in all quarters and on all topics. There is something from the events of life, and most of their concurrent circumstances, which every hour, by slow and almost insensible degrees, is wrought into the very organization of society itself; incorporated into all its substance and progress—mingled with its usages—moulding its ordinary occupations—tinging with various hues its laws and literature—and, in fine, modifying even its religious creeds. It is absorbed in the growth of communities, and gives a different character to them, as air, earth, and moisture enter into the growing plant; and in both cases it becomes a part of the very fibre and heart, as well as bark or color. As the nutriment thus furnished is appropriate and useful, the growth is rich and beautiful; while, if bad, it becomes dwarfish and useless. By examining such circumstances, we discover the manner in which the character of nations has been formed, like the

surface of the earth, or a transition rock—here a layer of one kind and thickness, there another, different both in quality and size. We obtain a sort of petrification of the currents of life, as they run onward in various places and ages. Even the ordinary amusements of a people indicate something of the national mind and taste, especially if they are, as has been quaintly said of ours, such novel amusements as banking and the credit system. Indeed, in this historical search, we should overlook nothing human; and, in the whole circle of existence, should scrutinize not only civil and political affairs, legislation and government—not only, too, religion and the arts, with literature and science—but geology, climates, soils, and all their products, wonderfully interwoven, often and highly important to the moral, no less than the physical condition of mankind.

What floods of light are to be poured in this way on what is obscure, may be imagined when we reflect that the researches of modern geology alone have crowded this whole planet with new wonders, and made its caverns, stones, and mountains full of the history of its growth, and of the plants and animals that in ages past inhabited it. Another aid will be to persuade every possessor of important facts concerning individuals of eminence, as well as valuable improvements, to communicate them with more freedom to the world. So with all interesting journals, as well as letters, memoirs, and curiosities in the whole ranges of science and of natural history. They may develope some new traits of character, or throw out new light on both the animal or vegetable kingdom, or advance science or the arts by some experiments which inventive genius may, in solitude, for the first time have tested, or present new views on some principles of action, which, by the patient or headstrong may, on some retired theatre, have been pushed further. Or they may unfold momentous facts to set history right, which pride or interest may for a time have suppressed, or may open discoveries, or the germs of them in physics or mechanism, destined to revolutionize society.

None should despair of great benefits from this, when they remember what progress has been made in only the last fifty years by increased attention in academies, colleges, institutes, and governments, no less than by individuals, to collect and preserve statistical facts. What new data have been procured by them as to diseases and their causes?—the resources and expenses of governments?—the extent of their commerce, manufactures, and agriculture? What additions to the means for just legislation, and the true understanding by nations of the profit and loss by their groundless jealousies, non-intercourses, reprisals, and wars. The last census of the Union, however imperfect in some particulars, may be proudly pointed to as a monument of great usefulness in enquiries like some of these, not only to us, but the civilized world.

Nothing can more strikingly illustrate the greater certainty that may be approached, if not attained, in many historical data, and

which some improvements in modern times, especially in the sciences, have, by great care, actually reached, than the exact description, even long beforehand, of distant eclipses, and, in nautical almanacs, the accurate calculations, even to seconds, of some coming events, thus "casting their shadows before;" and, what we have been less accustomed to, till the use of steam, the certain regularity with which packets cross even an ocean, not differing a day often from the time anticipated. And the still more remarkable exactitude, considering the distance and nature of the service, which was attained by the care and skill of the commander of the late exploring expedition. After navigating two oceans, fulfilling various engagements, and making a large number of scientific observations, he was able to reach Sidney, in New Holland, and take his departure thence for the south pole, within twelve hours of the time indicated in his instructions a year or two previous, on the opposite side of the globe.

Carry a like caution and accuracy into every thing—in recording as well as observing—and how much sooner could many doubts still remaining be solved? In science, for instance, by this course it could not be long before it must be certain whether or not electricity, galvanism, and magnetism, are essentially the same agents; agents so important, that some of them not only aid in the cure of disease, but are probably vital to the whole economy of animal and vegetable existence, and in other views are not only indispensable, through the needle, to track forests and traverse oceans in safety, but, by American ingenuity, have enabled us to draw fire harmlessly from the heavens—and, through the electro-magnetic telegraph, to write with a pen in lightning, and send even ideas instantaneously for miles. Whether, in brief, the great northern lights are governed by some physical laws connected with either of these marvellous powers, or are independent in their gorgeous movements; and thousands of other doubts and perplexities which have agitated the lecture room, the laboratory, and closet.

So, in respect to many of the secret springs of human action and human welfare, it is a course like this, and only a course like this, which will ever enable mankind to accomplish that great desideratum in modern times—the removal of all doubts as to the best systems of education and industry; or to solve those other problems in society so difficult, yet most interesting—how to reconcile the interests of the few with the many—how to harmonize obedience to law with the soundest, if not largest, liberty; and, what is practically still more vital, to convince all as to the equal claims of the poor with the rich, to have such laws and institutions govern as are calculated to ensure to virtue and industry an equal enjoyment of all the necessities of life, and prevent avarice and cupidity, whether in the toils of mines, factories, or elsewhere, from tasking infancy, want, and dependence, beyond the just limits of humanity and public morals.

The last direct aid in preventing historical uncertainty, which I now have time to particularize, is to strive more to cast away passion, prejudice, and party—those prolific sources of error—and, on occasions so responsible as that of writers professing to bear testimony to the truth for enlightening posterity as well as the present generation, to have the head and heart warmed into the strongest sense of accountability. Let nothing be feared but God. If such a feeling were in the ascendant, there would grow up every where a firmer assurance in the result that industry and unbending integrity should reach, when devoted to a subject of such high moment. This attitude, so lofty in the composer of regular history, should be inculcated and imitated through its remotest ramifications, whether in biographies, sketches, voyages, travels, or even a newspaper and magazine. Though all the writers of these may not be able, on every occasion, to act like the god of the stoics, as if formed of intellect without passion, yet all should feel the solemnity of their duty in such positions, to write unwarpd by passion as well as undismayed by the frowns of power; and they should evince, whenever demanded in support of the truth, a self-forgetting, self-sacrificing spirit, above the slavery of party, and no less impartial and just than fearless.

With a view to remedy the evils resulting from historical uncertainties, it is necessary also to exert untiring efforts to preserve as well as improve the records of mankind. It has been shown, that nearly as much is suffered from their mutilation and loss as from original imperfections. During the last three centuries one great engine, and probably the greatest to secure the preservation of history, has been the art of printing. Every year, as it has embodied the truth, quicker, easier, and oftener, it has diffused it wider and at less expense; and has thus interested millions more in its safety. It is susceptible of still higher advances, to aid certainty in history by pushing improvements, in all those particulars, still further. When well directed, nothing can, with so much certainty, seize and preserve the Cynthia of the minute in opinions as well as fashion—nothing so well give, in all things, the true “form and pressure” of the times. Indeed, the experience of near four hundred years has evinced, that the Proteus, ever changing in politics, literature, taste, and all the scenes of busy action, can be arrested and painted to the life only by this consummate artist, whose colors, though few, are durable; whose canvas, though thin as paper, can be made as imperishable as time; and whose pencil, in the type, will survive every thing but the wreck of matter.

The multiplication of copies of all important works, which this will tend to produce—the more thorough diffusion of them, which their reduced price will encourage—the increased intelligence to understand them, and appreciate the importance of their preservation, would then exist, and would require that the whole mass of any society must be extirpated before all its historical memorials could again perish.

'The more the power of the press is thus extended, the more also will different compilations operate as checks on the uncertainties and other errors of each, and thus will improve the character and quality of what is written, no less than increase the quantity.

In order to excite greater care, activity, and interest on this point, let me present here one illustration, and it shall be only one, of the importance of this accurate preservation of the memorials of former experience. It is this : We may, from our ancestors, receive governments, religions, codes of law, and numerous institutions alleged to be good. But where is the testimony in their favor without historical records ? When free enquiry or impatience of authority dare—as they may, in the liberty wisely allowed here—to question their excellence, how is it to be tested, unless their origin, progress, and influences have been honestly chronicled ? On any excitement or novelty, every thing will, otherwise, be set afloat. True, we may talk and argue in their support, but there will be opposed argument to argument, conjecture to conjecture, and one confident assertion to another, and there will be no anchor to the judgment, nor security and stability in public opinion, without some such steady light as recorded and certain experience. Public opinion might still be gigantic in power, but it would be blind, and under occasional reverses, incident to the best human systems, or under some plausible innovation in bold and bad hands, or under some sudden impulse, some fierce enthusiasm, or some ferocious fanaticism, all the foundations of government may be shaken, if not uprooted.

The moderns, in such cases, instead of being regarded, as Bentham called them, the real ancients, living in the old age of the world, with all its facts and experience treasured up for guides, would either have none on some points, or in the uncertainty of history in many cases would have contradictory facts—incoherent and imperfect truths—halting and lame experience—doubting pilots, blind guides, and cloudy and shifting landmarks.

From all these considerations, it would seem that, to some extent, the cure of evils like these is both feasible and useful, and that it would contribute not only to the purity, stability, and excellence of every thing which advances civilization or glory ; but ensure their continued increase, as well as wider diffusion far beyond one generation or people, even into the whole length and breadth of humanity.

On this occasion there is not time, without tediousness, to enumerate more of the means of improvement in respect to the uncertainties in history and their attendant evils. But that these few means, if faithfully exerted, would do much to reform not only the character of the annals of mankind, but mankind themselves, will be obvious from reflecting a moment on their natural tendencies, and should operate as a powerful incentive to promptitude and earnestness in adopting them. For, consider how many of the present contests in judicial tribunals to ascertain rights, and of the party

struggles to settle public policy, with not a few of the polemical controversies to adjust points of doctrine, would, by the prevalence of such a new temper and such new practices, lessen, if not in time entirely disappear.

When a reverence for truth thus becomes more inwrought and habitual on all occasions, the whole reading world will of course become more confiding in what is written; and there would then prevail, and justly so, everywhere more faith—more in almost every thing—more in nature, more in Providence, more in man and his prospects, and, in short, more inviolable faith in history. Nor will such a faith be inconsistent, and, as is frequently now the case, be uselessly seeking impossibilities—such as persecution and oppression reconciled with pure religion or humanity, and true liberty co-existing with licentiousness—public economy with private extravagance—and vigor with divided councils, or prosperity with idleness, waste, and disorder.

But it would be enlightened and rational faith; as the chronicles of life might then well be looked on as nearer real “Daguerreotypes of the age,” and what are called facts, thus becoming in reality much closer to the truth; all opinions and theories would have a foundation far more solid to build on; and every event operating as a lesson, and every acquisition a step onward, the mind of society would in this way hourly add to its treasures what was reliable, and would be constantly developing in results more of the excellencies of that inductive philosophy so eloquently recommended by him whom Pope eulogises as “the greatest of mankind.”

Without going into illustrations on this point, the general inference appears just—that under such a course, existence every where, and in every thing, would tend more to become a continued school, since the whole would be a laboratory, making daily experiments and discoveries for the whole, and for the future as well as the present; and the mind of all would thus unremittingly co-operate for all. If we should thus fail, as we might, in realizing the hopes of the most sanguine—that not a shell need be washed idly to the shore, nor a crystal sparkle without instruction, nor a leaf drop, nor even a sparrow fall, without imparting knowledge or improvement—yet it is certain that the tears would never flow from misfortune, nor smiles enliven the face of hope, nor a passion of any kind animate or depress, but their causes and consequences would be better understood, and, indeed, every thing valuable be more known and common to the whole. Instruction and fellow-feeling will more pervade both the palace and the cottage—“the court, the camp, the hamlet, and the grove.” The extremes of society in rank or fashion, wealth, or even genius, will more learn that they need mutual aid, have a common nature, a common origin and destiny, and should intermingle benefits as well as sympathies for mutual progress and safety. In short, man will more be regarded every where as a man, and as nothing any where but a man. At least the indomitable spirit and the enthusiasm to im-

prove, and the love of truth, will then be more aroused and more common, and more conquering over all obstacles. More people will then comprehend thoroughly, and hence duly appreciate, the high moral courage which dares do the right under all obstacles, however formidable; and thus more will be encouraged to sustain the right, and to hazard for it, when necessary, every thing dear, in defiance of the tyranny of custom or fashion, no less than the dungeon, the faggot, the bastile, the cross, and all those tortures which martyrs to the truth, and victims to oppression, have suffered in the worst of times.

But many such sacrifices will then gradually cease to be necessary, since the whole race as advancing beings, and destined to form, perhaps, in time, one great brotherhood, will be likely to look on each other with increasing charity, and will gradually approach nearer the original unity of the human family. And if one language in such wide dispersions should not again be found feasible, and be used by all; or one form of government, in such various conditions of the race, does not prove the greatest blessing to the many, and hence find favor with every people; or one code of laws, under different wants and positions, not appear to all nations superior in leading features, and become as sacred as the civil or common law have been to particular communities; yet we hope that one religion would prove truest, and pervade the whole, and undoubtedly there must be a closer and brighter view of all this promised land. For certainty instead of doubt, co-operation instead of hostility, and all the powers of man more unitedly crowding forward to certain great ends, rather than paralysed by half being antagonists to the rest, will in time more improve the world, as surely as gentler influences, and a union of forces of any kind, are most likely to triumph over division and strife. So all the faculties being then measured as well as applied with greater accuracy, a juster discrimination can easier separate the practicable from what is visionary—facts from fancy—the casual and incidental from what is necessary or inevitable—the right more from the plausible. And thus, then, we not only ought to, but would have what are the glory and bliss of freemen in every age—light and publicity, instead of secrecy and mysteries; liberty, rather than its shadow; patriotism, and not its phantom; justice, rather than the mockery of it; justice, too, in social life, and literary criticism, and in the struggle of politics and polemics, as well as judicial controversies. We should then also not only know more what has been, what is, and hence what probably will be; but we shall know it with a certainty and truthfulness likely to bear fruits, and ensure to us higher progress, and light up daily the prospects of humanity; and in this way there will be a more tolerant mission in all things useful going on, reciprocally among nations, no less than individuals, which must in time go far to renovate the world.



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